

COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN

The community facilities of any community are often indicative of its general economic health and vigor. The facilities of a community provided for its citizens play an important role in the progressive growth and sustained economic well-being which is necessary to the community. Not only are such facilities as parks and recreational areas, schools, public buildings, and public utilities vital to the existing residents, but prospective industry wishing to locate in the area place high priority on such services before making their final decision. Illustration 15 shows the location of all the existing community facilities in the Village.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities

Community Park - The park is located at Nemaha and Third Streets east of the Central Business District, and has an area of approximately 2.1 acres. It is the only major park in the community. Its recreation facilities include sand box, benches, six picnic tables, drinking fountain, two swing sets, one slide, one shelter house, and a platform. It is a very nicely wooded area, and is widely used by the people in the Village.

Ball Park - This is a lighted athletic field located at the southern part of the Village with an area of about 3.0 acres. It is equipped with baseball diamond and bleachers. The park can be used for baseball, softball, touch football and volley ball activities.

Playground - The children's playground is located at the Firth Grade School, and is about 2.3 acres. It is designed for the school children and is not intended nor adequate for the whole community.

Other Recreation Facilities - Since limited recreation facilities are available, some people have taken advantage of facilities outside the community, such as the Wagon Train Lake in Hickman, movie theaters, and golf courses in Lincoln and Beatrice, which are within easy driving distance.

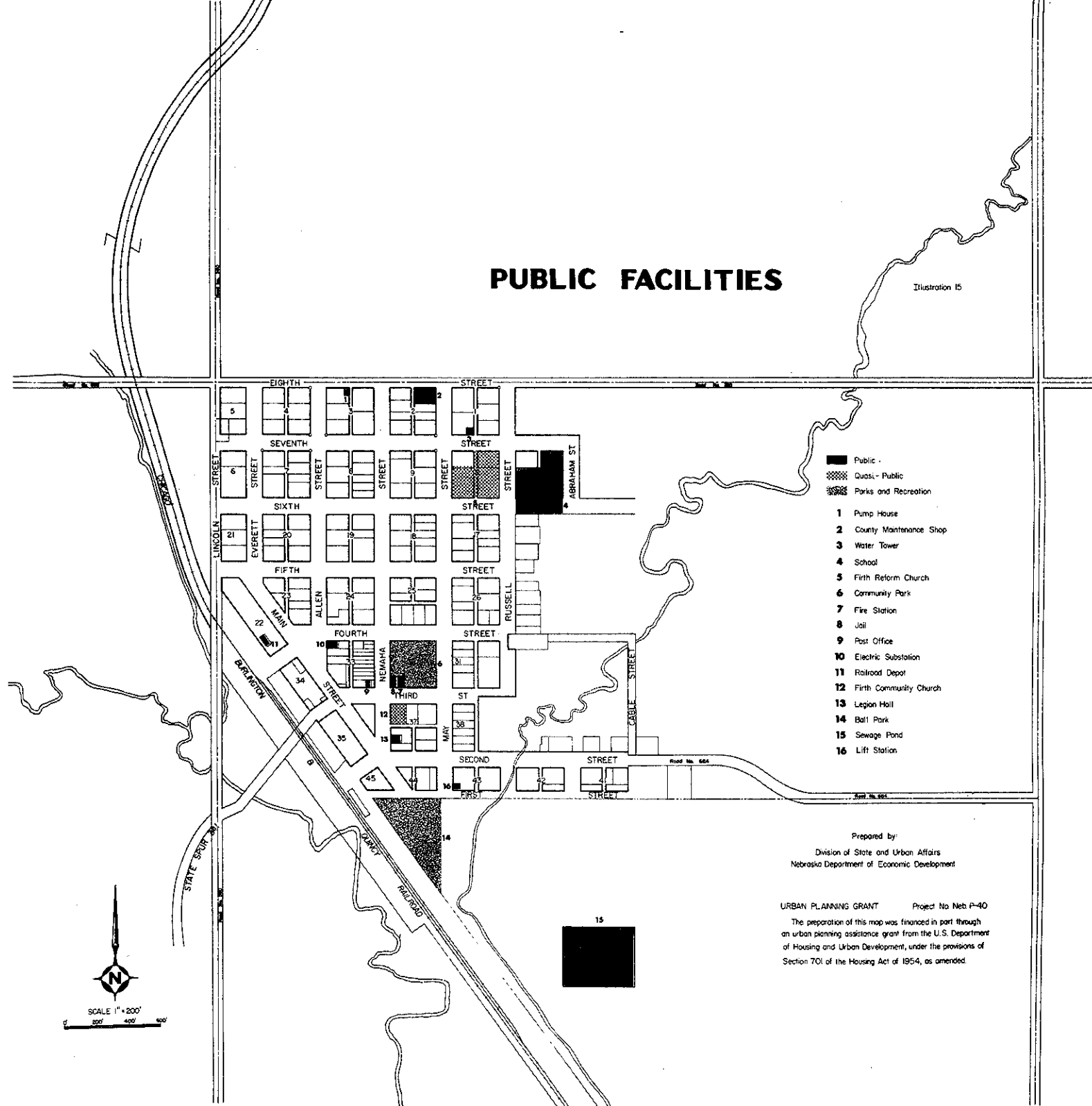
Park and Recreation Standards

The following park and recreation standards are designed for the needs of the Village. These standards are derived from the National Standards, and the standards recommended by the Nebraska Game, Forestation and Park Commission:

1. Recreation Land Needs...2.5 acres per 100 persons.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

Illustration 15



Prepared by:
Division of State and Urban Affairs
Nebraska Department of Economic Development

URBAN PLANNING GRANT Project No. Neb-P-40
The preparation of this map was financed in part through an urban planning assistance grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, under the provisions of Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954, as amended.

2. Playlots...These are the equivalent of the backyards of homes in sparsely settled residential districts. The size of each lot may range from 2500 to 5000 square feet in area. The playlot is designed for pre-school children, and should have low swings, slides, sand box, jungle gyms, and space for running and circle games. Passive recreation is also provided for adults while they watch their children.
3. Neighborhood Playground...It is designed for children whose age ranges from 6 to 14 years, and is intended as the recreation center of the neighborhood, and is usually within one-quarter mile walking distance of the dwellings it serves. The preferable location of a playground is adjacent to a community center or elementary school where supervised recreation is possible. The playground should have at least 4 acres, and an area for facilities similar to the playlots, and open space for informal play. Space is also needed for quiet activities such as crafts, dramatics, and story-telling.
4. Neighborhood Playfield...It is intended for both young people and adults, and to provide for a variety of recreational activities. The recreation facilities normally include baseball diamond, softball

diamond, comfort stations, volley ball court, and badminton court. It should have an area of at least 10 acres and a service radius of not more than three-fourths to one mile.

5. Community Park...The size of Firth is so small that it can be considered as one neighborhood; therefore, the community park is actually a neighborhood park. This is the place where active and passive recreation facilities for all ages are provided. There should be areas for picnicking, and other facilities listed under playlots and neighborhood playground.

Evaluation of Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities

The existing parks and recreation areas consist of Community Park (2.1 acres), Ball Park (3.0 acres) and the School Playground (2.3 acres), or a total of 7.4 acres. Using the standard of 2.5 acres per 100 population, Firth should have 8.25 acres for parks and recreation. By 1990 when the designed population is 469, the area requirement should be 11.7 acres, or 4.3 acres more than the existing areas.

The Village does not have playlots at the present time, and the school playground will be closed in the summer of 1969 due to relocation of schools to the new consolidated school building. This will further curtail the acreage of the park and recreation area in the Village.

The Ball Park is presently inadequate in area and facilities. It requires a variety of facilities like volley ball court, basketball court, badminton court, and comfort stations.

The Community Park is also inadequate in area and facilities. According to the proposed standards, it requires at least 2.9 additional acres, and needs additional facilities like jungle gyms, places for soccer, softball, tennis, handball, and volley ball.

Recommendations

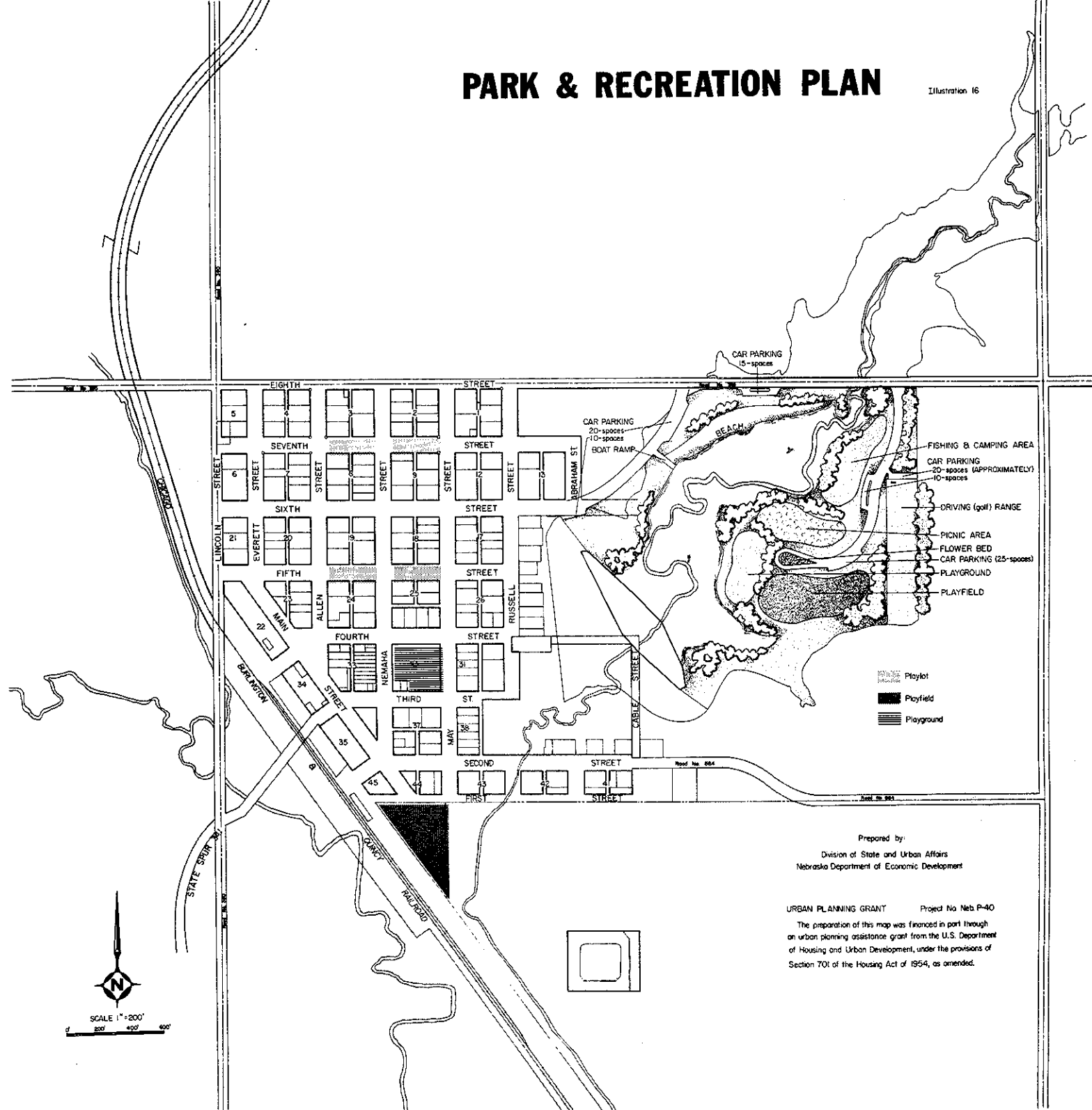
1. All the existing parks and playgrounds should be properly maintained. This includes grass mowing, painting and repairing of play facilities and bleachers.
2. The closed street areas of Fifth and Seventh Streets, as proposed in the Transportation Plan, will be ideal locations for playlots. It is recommended that the closed streets at Seventh and Allan, Seventh and Nemaha, Fifth and Allen, Fifth and Nemaha, be designated as playlots and improved according to the recommended standards.
3. Designate the existing Community Park as the Neighborhood Play-ground, and improve the facilities according to the recommended

standards. Since the park is located in an area where expansion of the present site is impossible, it is necessary that some additional acreage and facilities of a Neighborhood Play-ground be included in the Firth Lake Recreation Area which will be developed in the near future.

4. Designate the existing Ball Park as the Neighborhood Playfield, and improve according to the recommended standard. Since the future expansion of the Ball Park is hampered by the railroad track on the west and south, and the Nemaha River on the east, the Firth Lake Recreation Area should also include certain facilities which are lacking in this park.
5. Designate the Firth Lake Recreation Area as the Community Park. The new park, which will be developed after the river dam is built, will consist of 62 acres of land, and 25 acres of water. It will have two major recreation areas - the western shore will have a service road, a boat dock, a beach area, change houses, toilets, and water wells; the eastern shore will have a golf driving range, playground, volley and basketball courts, tennis court, picnic and fishing areas. One hundred parking spaces will be available at various places.

PARK & RECREATION PLAN

Illustration 16



Prepared by:
Division of State and Urban Affairs
Nebraska Department of Economic Development

URBAN PLANNING GRANT Project No. Neb P-40
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An application for the Land and Water Conservation Fund was submitted to the Nebraska Game Commission in September, 1968, for the development of Firth Lake Recreation Area. The Fund is composed of 50 per cent Federal Grant, 25 per cent State Grant and 25 per cent local fund. It was informed in November, 1968, that no fund was appropriated to the Village for fiscal year 1970 due to limited amount of the Fund. However, the approval of this application is anticipated for fiscal year 1971.

Illustration 16 entitled Park and Recreation Plan shows the proposed playlots, playfield, playground, neighborhood park, and the general layout of the new community park. The section of County road 395 east of Russell Street needs to be elevated, and a bridge be built. The Lancaster County Road Department has scheduled these improvements in 1969. If this project is successfully completed, the potential of attracting tourists and commuters will be greatly increased in the years to come.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

The grade school in the Village belongs to the Norris School District No. 160 which consists of grades 1 through 4 in Roca; grades 1 through 6 in Panama; Kindergarten through 6 in Firth; Kindergarten and grades 7 through 8 in Hickman; Kindergarten and grades 9 through 12 in Cortland. The District was accredited "A" by the State Board of Education on June 21, 1965.

"The District became effective in June, 1964, and it encompasses approximately 200 square miles with an assessed valuation of over \$12,600,000. Enrollment was 500 elementary, 141 junior high and 228 senior high students. Illustration 17 entitled School District shows the exact boundary of the school district.

A bond issue in the amount of \$1,990,000 was approved on April 18, 1967, to build a consolidated school plant which is located on the northeast corner of a 160 acre site formerly known as the Gertsch farm, about three miles northwest of Firth.

The Consolidated plan will consist of an Elementary School Building and a Junior-Senior High School Building. The Elementary School (K-6) will have two kindergartens and four classrooms per grade ultimately. Initial construction will omit a four classroom wing on this building which is to be constructed as the need or additional space arises. This building will accommodate 720 students initially and 800 ultimately.

The Junior-Senior High School is designed to offer ultimately a complete curriculum for grades 7 through 12, including academics, science, art, shop, vocational and physical education. The initial building is projected to handle 500 students with expansion capable of housing 1000.**

*Information from the office of Superintendent of Schools.